

**Aquaculture Advisory Council
October 12, 2018
Cooperative Extension Ocean County
Toms River
Meeting Minutes**

Members Present: Sec. Douglas Fisher, Mr. Joseph Cimino (Comm. Catherine McCabe), Mr. Loel Muetter (Comm. Shareef Elnahal), Dr. Dave Bushek, Mr. Mike De Luca (Dr. Robert Goodman), Dr. Douglas Zemeckis, Ms. Lisa Calvo, Mr. Barney Hollinger, Mr. George Saridakis, Mr. Joe Rizzo (Mr. John Maxwell), Ms. Betsy Haskin (via phone), Dr. Amanda Wenczel

Members Absent: Mr. Joseph Constance (Sec. Tahesha Way), Mr. Maury Sheets

Public in Attendance: Ned Gaine, Brick Wenzel, Virginia Wheatley, Jeff Normant, Michele Kropilak, Matt Gregg, Bill Avery, Tony Ni, Tommy Burke, Mike Alexander, Bill Riggan

Secretary Fisher called the meeting to order.

Motion to approve minutes from September 2017 passed; all in favor, 2 abstentions.

New member introductions. Secretary Fisher noted that “new” members to the AAC are all individuals that have been involved in the industry and Council prior to their role as official AAC member.

Dr. Wenczel requested that all members read through the current AAC by-laws to: 1) review current operating procedures and 2) determine if anything should be changed or updated. Current by-laws require changes to be brought before the Council 60 days prior to next meeting.

Sec. Fisher introduced and provided background on the Aquaculture Development Plan (Plan). Dr. Wenczel provided the Council a copy of the Plan as well as a 2018 status report for action items in the Plan. Comments from the Council are requested prior to the next AAC meeting; no discussion occurred. Sec. Fisher requested that the Council honor the draft & internal, AAC-only nature of the 2018 status update.

Mr. Jeff Normant provided an update on the Shellfish Aquaculture Work Group (SAWG). The SAWG started in 2014, bringing together state and federal agencies to address industry needs. Red Knot listing led to delay in progress, but now the SAWG is reorganized and active again in 2018. Committees have been created to move items forward at a faster pace; 5 total committees. Plan for small industry invite-only meeting soon, then a full stakeholder meeting to follow.

Ms. Lisa Calvo requested clarification on role of AAC relative to SAWG, specifically if new rules were proposed. Dr. Wenczel noted that the AAC serves the role of addressing any topics related to aquaculture and regulatory changes are certainly applicable. Suggestions for the SAWG or proposed rules changes can, and will be, brought to the SAWG for review. Mr. Normant noted that current regulations are dated and do need to be revisited.

Mr. Mike De Luca provided an update on the Red Knot Stakeholder Committee (SC). Some of the measures the SC has preliminarily discussed include: 1) timing of work around the tidal cycle; 2) distance from shore for boat access; and 3) rack height. More formal discussion on recent research is scheduled for Monday & Tuesday of next week (10.15 & 10.16). Agency Work Group (AWG) will be present for the Monday session. Mr. De Luca also provided a quick listing of the presenters and research expect during next week's meetings.

Mr. Barney Hollinger, also a member of the SC, mentioned that a change in access timing occurred last year, showing there is movement on the measures.

Ms. Jenny Tomko provided an update on the ADZ expansion (as it was noted would be discussed during the SC meetings). BSF has acquired all permits for the ADZ infill and riparian areas. Plan for expansion must first go through administration (NJDEP) and then the Delaware Bay Shellfish Council. Once items are finalized, it will be shared.

Ms. Calvo commended the SC for a robust set of presenters at their meeting next week; but expressed dismay that the public is not invited to ensure transparency with and participation from all interested parties. Ms. Calvo made motion for AAC to request an open meeting, seconded by Mr. Joe Rizzo. Sec. Fisher began discussion by determining who is running the meetings and how the AAC motion can address concerns. Mr. De Luca noted that SC meetings are closed meetings and the SC by-laws state they will be closed meetings. Dr. Dave Bushek noted that the Rutgers hosted science symposium last fall was an open meeting, which the SC attended, but did not host. Sec. Fisher expressed concern that the AAC may not be able to address this issue but rather may need to be another individual group. After discussion, the motion was amended to recommend the science portion of future SC meetings be open to the public/interested parties. All in favor of the motion, so carried. Mr. De Luca, the AAC rep to the SC will convey the message to the SC chairs.

Dr. Wenczel reminded everyone that the Census of Aquaculture, a supplemental to the Census of Agriculture, is forthcoming. Questions on USDA Censuses should go to Mr. Bruce Eklund (not present at this meeting, presented ~ 1 year ago for Census of Agriculture info session). Sec. Fisher stressed the need for participation in the Census initiatives from the USDA and the extreme measures the USDA takes to ensure confidentiality.

Captain Jason Snellbaker provided update that Marine Enforcement is tight with current budget and NOAA funding may zero out Sept. 2019 which would leave no funding for enforcement. Marine Enforcement supports aquaculture and encourages growers to read regulations and call him with any questions (specifically in NJAC 7:12, related to the Commercial Shellfish Aquaculture Permit). Items to consider/topics that have led to violations recently: 1) renew permits yearly; 2) time & temperature logs due Sept. 15th; 3) seed size must be kept below thresholds in waters other than approved; 4) call in for tide-dependent harvest; 5) tagging; 6) bound journal, filled out correctly; 7) Marine Sanitation Devices must follow guidelines (and be present); & 8) wet storage can only be done in approved waters. Not a violation but recommending all gear have an ID so that it can be tracked back to owner. This has become a more recent issue with storms and winter ice with gear moving far off-lease. [At end of meeting,

another reminder that Commercial Shellfish Aquaculture Permit and Hatchery/Nursery Permits require yearly application/renewal.]

Council Comments: Mr. Hollinger noted that an increase in fire inspections has been occurring at all facilities and permits are being required. Sec. Fisher clarified that there had been few inspections of farms over the years, so this recent increase seems out of the ordinary, but it is all following the code/regulations. NJDA has been working on this item & working with inspectors since it was first noted and continue to work with farmers and counties on this item. Any concerns regarding this matter, please notify Monique Purcell or Amanda Wenzel.

Mr. George Saridakis asked for clarification on where the industry and State stand with FSMA implementation (Food Safety Modernization Act). Sec. Fisher stressed that New Jersey is as far along as any other State with implementation. NJDA is implementing the act instead of DOH because of the relationships and knowledge housed in the NJDA when it comes to farms and food handling. Dr. Wenzel clarified that for fish and shellfish, HACCP is already (and has been) required and FSMA is essentially requiring a similar level of safe handling that aquaculturists already follow (e.g., water testing, tagging, chain-of-custody).

At the discretion of the Chair, Sec. Fisher added a public comment session at the beginning of future meetings; therefore, all future meetings will have public comment at open and close to ensure any motions/decisions are informed by public input.

Mr. Normant noted that lease renewals start on Monday. He encouraged early renewals due to high volume in December. Also, reminder that when you renew your lease, apply for your Commercial Shellfish Aquaculture Permit. Mr. Matt Gregg added that Harvester Training is every 2 years and must be up-to-date for Commercial Shellfish License and lease renewals.

Mr. Bill Avery questioned if the DOH license he is required to have could be coordinated with the other licenses and training he has to have- noting a dozen or so permits for his operation. Mr. Loel Muetter responded that the ISSC requires separate training for harvesters and dealers. They cover similar items, but both are currently required. Perhaps in the future, these trainings for harvesters and dealers could be combined into one program.

Mr. Avery questioned the definition of stakeholder and how it is used, especially in the red knot situation. He wanted to know who was invited. Dr. Wenzel clarified that the SC is a set of representatives from interested parties, those who have been involved since the listing of the red knot. It does not include every individual to ensure the number was kept manageable, to ensure the SC could operate as an independent body, separate from the AWG. Mr. Ned Gaine noted that public interest may be met but the private interest may not be met. Dr. Bushek agreed with Mr. Gaine's assessment, but stressed that there are two representatives who are the conduit for private interest (growers) on the SC.

Discussion on balancing the AAC with discussions and representation between oyster and hard clam growers/issues. Two current seats are hold-overs where new members could be appointed; those are Assembly Speaker seats. Mr. Normant requested a list of AAC membership and appointments.

Referencing the Aquaculture Development Plan, Mr. Gaine stressed that the 1995 plan is a true plan and that future plans should replicate the format, content, etc. The 2011 document does not “plan” but rather provides information without direction forward. Sec. Fisher welcomed any ideas that will enhance development of the industry. Mr. Gaine also stressed that the SAWG is proceeding without the AAC providing a plan for development. It would be beneficial for the AAC to be the driver of change, as opposed to the agencies moving items forward and AAC reviewing.

Mr. Joseph Cimino noted that the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission has created a Committee on Aquaculture, with Mr. Russ Babb serving as NJ representative. When formed, all members recognized that each state has their own method for regulating shellfish aquaculture. The primary role, as viewed initially, may be unifying the process & review required for seed importation.

Mr. Brick Wenzel noted the 100-year anniversary of the NJ Farm Bureau, with Sec. Perdue attending the upcoming convention. There is a fisheries round-table as part of the meetings, held in Princeton, November 12, 2018. American Farm Bureau is looking at developing national policy and using state meetings with industry to inform discussions.

Meeting adjourned.